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Dream Country

A · DREAM

Neil Gaiman · Kelley Jones · Malcolm Jones

COME ON, DARLING. COME TO BED.

AND LEAVE THE DOOR TO THE KITCHEN OPEN SO THE KITTY CAN GET TO THE LITTER TRAY.

YES, HON.

AW, COME **ON**, DON. IF YOU DON'T GET UP HERE SOON, I WON'T BE IN THE MOOD ANYMORE.

YES, HON.

G'NIGHT, KITTY.

I DON'T KNOW HOW I CAN GET OUT. I CAN'T GET THROUGH ANY OF THE WALL OPENINGS.

SSS! IT'S TONIGHT!

WHAT?

SHE'S **HERE**. ARE YOU COMING? IT SHOULD BE AMUSING.

CONVERSION BY WILDSTORM

UP THERE. A CLEAR-HOLE IS PARTLY OPENED. YOU CAN GET OUT THROUGH THERE.

SHAKE YOUR TAIL, LITTLE ONE. WE MUSTN'T MISS THIS.

WAIT FOR ME. OH *WAIT* FOR ME, *PLEASE*.

OHH. CAN YOU NOT *SCENT* IT, CHILD? THE CALL OF THE NIGHT?

HURRY. *HURRY*.

WHAT WILL SHE BE LIKE?

WHO KNOWS? NOT THIS CAT.

WELL-MET, FELLOW NIGHT-THREADERS.

HELLO. WE'RE GOING TO SEE HER.

ME TOO, ALTHOUGH I CAN'T SEE MUCH POINT IN IT.

THEN WHY ARE YOU HERE?

HMMPH. *CURIOSITY*, PERHAPS.

I WANT TO KNOW WHAT SHE HAS TO *SAY*.

SO DO WE ALL, CHILD. SO DO WE ALL.

A DREAM OF A THOUSAND CATS

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SISTERS. BROTHERS. GOOD HUNTING.

THANK YOU FOR COMING TO LISTEN TO ME; FOR YOUR WILLINGNESS TO HEAR MY MESSAGE.

AND I HOPE THAT WHEN I HAVE FINISHED, SOME OF YOU MAY SHARE MY DREAM.

I WAS NOT *ALWAYS* AS YOU SEE ME TODAY.

ONCE, MANY YESTERDAYS GONE, I, LIKE MANY OF YOU, WAS IN THE THRALL OF HUMAN BEINGS, LIVING IN THEIR WORLD : *PLAYTHING, POSSESSION* AND *TOY.*

AND I *FOOLED* MYSELF -- AS, PERHAPS, MANY OF *YOU* FOOL YOURSELVES -- THAT I WAS IN CONTROL OF MY OWN LIFE.

THEY *FED* ME, DID THEY NOT? THEY GAVE ME *COMFORT* AND *WARMTH.*

AND WHAT DID *I* GIVE THEM IN RETURN? SOME AFFECTION, PERHAPS. MY PRESENCE.

LITTLE ENOUGH, REALLY, FOR WHAT *THEY* OFFERED.

HE WAS A TOM-CAT.

RAGGED OF EAR.

DARK OF EYE.

IT WAS MY TIME FOR LOVE; AND HE WAS MY CHOICE FOR LOVER.

OUR PLEASURE IN EACH OTHER, AND THE CONSUMMATION OF OUR MUTUAL HUNGER, WAS SCREECHED TO THE HEAVENS, AND SCREAMED TO THE ARCHES OF THE SKY.

HE WAS STRONG, AND FAST, AND HIS CLAWS AND TEETH WERE SHARP AS WINTER.

I NEVER SAW HIM AGAIN. BUT I HAVE NOT FORGOTTEN HIM.

IN THE FULLNESS OF TIME, OUR PLEASURE BROUGHT FORTH OFFSPRING, A WONDERFUL UNITY OF BOTH OUR MARKINGS.

I ANTICIPATED THE ZEST WITH WHICH I WOULD TEACH THEM OF LIFE...

...OF THE JOYS OF WASHING, OF HUNTING, OF SURVIVAL.

THEY WHISPERED TO ME THEIR DELIGHT: IN HAVING TAKEN FLESH IN MY BLOODLINE; OF TASTING AIR, AND MILK; WHISPERED THEIR BELIEF IN THE FUTURE.

MY HUMANS DID NOT SHARE OUR JOY.

YOU ***KNEW*** SHE WAS IN HEAT! WHY THE ***HELL*** DIDN'T YOU LOCK HER IN?

STOP ***COMPLAINING***, PAUL. ***I*** THINK THEY'RE KIND OF ***CUTE***.

CUTE? SHE'S A PURE-BRED BLUE POINT ***SIAMESE!***

THESE LITTLE BUNDLES OF FLUFF AREN'T WORTH ***DIDDLY-SQUAT.***

meep.

I FELT THEM FROM AFAR, IN THE DARK, AS THE COLD WATER TOOK THEM.

FELT THEM THRESH AND CLAW SIGHTLESSLY; FELT THEM CALL ME, IN THEIR PANIC AND THEIR FEAR.

AND THEN THEY WERE *GONE*.

FOR GOD'S ***SAKE***, MARION! IT'S NOT EVEN AS IF SHE ***UNDERSTANDS***. I MEAN, ***LOOK*** AT HER. SHE'S PROBABLY ***RELIEVED***.

SHE'S PRACTICALLY A ***KITTEN*** HER***SELF***. SHE WOULD HAVE EX***HAUS***TED HERSELF...

I'M SURE YOU'RE ***RIGHT***, PAUL. BUT I CAN'T HELP FEELING A LITTLE ***GUILTY***.

I KNEW THEN THAT I HAD BEEN FOOLING MYSELF. THAT WE WERE SUBORDINATE. THAT ***WHILE*** WE LIVED WITH HUMANITY WE COULD ***NOT*** CALL OURSELVES ***FREE***.

AND I PRAYED.

I PRAYED TO THE DARKNESS, TO THE NIGHT, TO THE *CARRION KIND.*

I PRAYED TO THE KING OF THE CATS, THE KIND'S EMISSARY ON EARTH, HE WHO WALKS AMONGST US AND WE DO NOT KNOW HIM.

I *PRAYED...*

...AND I *DREAMED.*

WHY HAVE YOU VENTURED TO THE HEART OF THE DREAMING, LITTLE CAT?

THERE IS *NOTHING* HERE FOR YOU.

I HAVE COME HERE FOR *JUSTICE*; I HAVE COME FOR *REVELATION*; I HAVE COME FOR *WISDOM*.

THE BIRD FLEW LOWER, BUT IT DID NOT COME WITHIN MY REACH.

"*JUSTICE?*" IT REPEATED. "JUSTICE IS A ***DELUSION*** YOU WILL NOT FIND ON ***THIS*** OR ANY OTHER SPHERE."

"AND ***WISDOM?*** WISDOM IS NO ***PART*** OF ***DREAMS***, LITHE WALKER, THOUGH DREAMS ARE A PART OF THE SUM OF EACH LIFE'S EXPERIENCES, WHICH IS THE ***ONLY*** WISDOM THAT MATTERS."

BUT *REVELATION?*

THAT IS THE PROVINCE OF DREAM.

IT *CAN* BE YOURS, BUT *ONLY* IF YOUR HEART IS STRONG.

DO YOU SEE THAT *MOUNTAIN?* IN THAT MOUNTAIN IS A CAVE, AND IN THAT CAVE LIVES THE CAT OF *DREAMS*, THE RULER OF THIS SLEEPING WORLD.

SEEK HIM OUT. BUT ***BEWARE***. THE WAY TO HIS CAVE IS HARD, AND A LITTLE CAT COULD COME TO MUCH HARM.

ALL PLACES ARE THE SAME TO ME. I WILL FIND THE CAVE, THEN, AND FIND MY ANSWERS.

I AM NOT AFRAID.

THEN FARE YOU WELL, DAUGHTER.

AND I LEFT THE DESERT OF BONES, AND I BEGAN THE LONG JOURNEY TO THE HOME OF THE CAT OF DREAMS.

I WALKED THROUGH THE WOOD OF GHOSTS, WHERE THE DEAD AND THE LOST WHISPERED CONTINUALLY, PROMISED ME WORLDS IF I WOULD ONLY STOP AND PLAY WITH THEM.

I CLOSED MY EARS TO THEIR ENTREATIES.

AT ONE POINT I THOUGHT I HEARD MY CHILDREN CALLING ME. BUT I STRAIGHTENED MY TAIL, AND I WALKED FORWARD.

I WALKED THROUGH THE COLD PLACES, HARD AND FROZEN, WHERE EVERY STEP WAS PAIN, EVERY MOVEMENT WAS TORMENT.

I WALKED ON.

I WALKED THROUGH THE WETNESS THAT NUMBED MY PAWS, DRENCHED MY FUR, TRIED TO WASH AWAY MY MEMORIES.

I WALKED THROUGH THE DARKNESS, THROUGH THE VOID, WHERE EVERYTHING WAS SUCKED FROM ME--EVERYTHING THAT MAKES ME WHAT I AM.

BUT EVEN IN THE EMPTINESS OF PURE NOTHING, NO LONGER KNOWING WHY I WAS WALKING OR WHAT I WAS SEEKING, I WALKED ONWARD.

AND, AFTER A TIME, MY SELF RETURNED TO ME, AND I LEFT THAT PLACE, AND I FOUND MYSELF AT THE MOUNTAIN OF THE CAT OF DREAMS.

AND I SAW THE CAVE, AND ITS GUARDIANS. AND I SAID TO THEM, "I HAVE COME TO TALK WITH THE CAT OF DREAMS."

WHY SHOULD WE LET YOU THROUGH, LITTLE ONE?

ONE SMALL ***MOUTHFUL***, AND *THAT* MOSTLY *FUR* AND ***BONE***.

WHY SHOULD THE DREAM LORD BE DISTURBED BY ONE SUCH AS *YOU*?

WELL? ANSWER US.

THE DREAM LORD WILL ***NOT*** BE AMUSED IF WE ALLOW YOU TO ***VEX*** HIM WITHOUT FIT REASON.

I HAVE COME ***TOO*** FAR TO BE TURNED AWAY ***NOW***, GRYPHON.

I WILL STATE MY BUSINESS TO THE ***DREAM LORD***, AND ***ONLY*** TO HIM.

I AM A ***CAT***, AND *I* KEEP MY OWN COUNSEL.

ENTER, THEN, PUSSYCAT.

BUT BE ***WARNED***: DREAMS HAVE THEIR PRICE.

AND I WALKED ON.

THE SCENT ON THE AIR WAS STRANGE, BUT STILL IT WAS CAT.

I WALKED FORWARD SLOWLY, EVERY SENSE SCREAMING AT ME TO FLEE THIS PLACE. MY FUR PRICKLED, MY CLAWS EXTENDED.

AND THEN I STOOD BEFORE HIM.

I AM HERE.

And who might you be?

A CAT. A WALKER IN NIGHT PLACES. A DEAD CROW SENT ME HERE, FOR REVELATION.

I HOPED I SOUNDED CONFIDENT, BUT TRULY I WAS SCARED.

Walk with me, then, little sister, and tell me why you have sought me out.

I... I WANT TO *UNDERSTAND.*

WHY COULD THEY TAKE MY CHILDREN FROM ME? ***WHY*** DO WE LIVE AS WE DO? I DON'T ***UNDERSTAND.***

A cat may look at a king, or so they say.

Look into my eyes then, little sister.

Look into my eyes.

AND IT SHOWED ME. IT TOLD ME THE TRUTH, EVEN AS I AM TELLING IT TO YOU NOW.

FOR IN ITS EYES I SAW PICTURES. AND IN THE PICTURES I SAW THE ***TRUTH***.

ALL CATS CAN SEE FUTURES, AND SEE ECHOES OF THE PAST. WE CAN WATCH THE PASSAGE OF CREATURES FROM THE INFINITY OF NOW, FROM ALL THE WORLDS LIKE OURS, ONLY FRACTIONALLY DIFFERENT.

AND WE FOLLOW THEM WITH OUR EYES, GHOST THINGS, AND THE HUMANS SEE NOTHING.

BUT THE REALITY THE CAT OF DREAMS SHOWED ME TRANSCENDED ANYTHING I HAD IMAGINED.

MANY, MANY SEASONS AGO, CATS TRULY RULED THIS WORLD.

WE WERE LARGER THEN, AND THIS WHOLE WORLD WAS CREATED FOR OUR PLEASURE. WE ROAMED IT AS WE WOULD, TAKING WHAT WE WANTED.

IN THOSE TIMES HUMANS WERE TINY CREATURES, NO LARGER THAN WE ARE NOW.

AND THE HUMANS WOULD GROOM US, AND FEED US, AND PET US.

AND WHEN THE MOON SHONE FULL, WE WOULD *HUNT* THEM, AND WE WOULD EAT *PART* OF THEM, BUT CHIEFLY WE WOULD HUNT THEM...

...FOR THEY WERE MORE DELIGHTFUL TO HUNT EVEN THAN BIRDS, AND BACK THEN, MICE WERE TOO SMALL AND INSIGNIFICANT FOR US TO DEIGN TO TOUCH.

OH, THE *JOY* OF THOSE HUNTING DAYS, BENEATH THE CAT'S MOON. THE *GAME* OF *CAT* AND *MAN*...

PRRRRRR.

THEN A HUMAN AROSE AMONGST THEM. A GOLDEN-FURRED MALE, BRED AND RAISED IN THE PLEASURE GARDENS OF ONE OF THE SYBARITIC FELINE LADIES.

AND THE HUMAN HAD A DREAM, AND AN INSPIRATION. AND IT WALKED AMONGST ITS FELLOWS, AND IT TOLD THEM...

DREAM!

DREAMS SHAPE THE WORLD.

DREAMS CREATE THE WORLD ANEW, EVERY NIGHT.

DO NOT DREAM THE WORLD THE WAY IT IS NOW, IN THRALL TO OUR FELINE MASTERS AND MISTRESSES.

DREAM A NEW WORLD. DREAM A WORLD OF HUMAN BEINGS. DREAM A WORLD IN WHICH WE ARE THE DOMINANT SPECIES, IN WHICH WE ARE THE KINGS AND THE QUEENS, AND THE GODS.

DREAM A WORLD IN WHICH WE WILL NO LONGER BE HUNTED AND KILLED BY CATS.

I DO NOT KNOW HOW MANY OF US IT WILL TAKE. BUT WE MUST DREAM IT, AND IF ENOUGH OF US DREAM IT, THEN IT WILL HAPPEN.

DREAMS SHAPE THE WORLD.

AND THE WORD SPREAD AMONGST THE HUMANS.

AND SOME OF THEM BELIEVED. AND THEY DREAMED.

AND, FOR A WHILE, NOTHING HAPPENED.

ONE NIGHT, ENOUGH OF THEM DREAMED. IT DID NOT TAKE MANY OF THEM. A *THOUSAND*, PERHAPS. NO MORE.

THEY DREAMED...

AND THE NEXT DAY, THINGS CHANGED.

HUMANS WERE HUGE, AND CATS WERE TINY. HUMANS WERE THE DOMINANT SPECIES, AND WE WERE PREY TO THEM, TO DOGS, TO THEIR METAL MACHINES.

PREY TO THE WORLD THE HUMANS HAD BROUGHT WITH THEM.

ALL THIS I SAW, WHEN I LOOKED INTO THE DREAM CAT'S EYES.

SO THEY DREAMED THE WORLD INTO THE FORM IT IS NOW?

Not exactly.

They dreamed the world so it ALWAYS WAS the way it is now, little one. There never WAS a world of high cat-ladies and cat-lords.

They changed the universe from the beginning of all things, until the end of time.

Do you understand now?

YES.

YES, I DO.

Then you know what your task must be. You know the burden you must bear.

Are you strong enough?

YES. I HOPE SO.

"Then wake, child. With my blessing."

YOU SEE, I HAD SEEN THE UNDER-SIDE OF WHAT HE HAD GIVEN TO ME.

IF *THEY* COULD DREAM IT...

WE COULD CHANGE THINGS *BACK*. IF WE *BELIEVED*. IF WE *DREAMED*.

WE ARE THE *DREAMS* OF THE *CARRION KIND*, THEY SAY, AND PERHAPS IT IS SO.

BUT IF *ENOUGH* OF *US* *DREAM*...

IF A BARE *THOUSAND* OF US DREAM...

...WE CAN *CHANGE* THE *WORLD*.

WE CAN DREAM IT *ANEW!* A WORLD IN WHICH *NO* CAT *SUFFERS* FROM THE MALICE OF HUMANS. IN WHICH *NO* CATS ARE *KILLED* BY HUMAN CAPRICE.

A *WORLD* THAT *WE* *RULE*.

I LEFT THE HUMANS THAT VERY DAY, TO SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS.

AND NOW I TRAVEL FROM PLACE TO PLACE.

I HAVE WALKED FOR LEAGUES BEYOND MEASURE. I HAVE STARVED, SOMETIMES; AND OFTEN I HAVE BEEN HURT. BUT I HAVE WALKED ON.

IN A METAL MACHINE I CROSSED THE COLD WATERS.

I HAVE PREACHED TO SOLITARY FERAL CATS IN EMPTY PLACES.

I HAVE SHOUTED MY MESSAGE TO THE STARS FROM ROOFTOPS AND WHISPERED IT TO DYING CATS IN ALLEYWAYS.

I HAVE SPOKEN TO ONE CAT, AND TO MANY. AND WHEREVER I HAVE GONE, MY MESSAGE IS THE SAME...

DREAM IT!

DREAM THE WORLD. NOT THIS PALLID SHADOW OF REALITY. DREAM THE WORLD THE WAY IT TRULY IS.

A WORLD IN WHICH ALL CATS ARE QUEENS AND KINGS OF CREATION.

THAT IS MY MESSAGE.

AND I SHALL KEEP MOVING, KEEP REPEATING IT, UNTIL I DIE.

OR UNTIL A THOUSAND CATS HEAR MY WORDS, AND BELIEVE THEM, AND DREAM...

AND WE COME AGAIN TO PARADISE.

THEN THERE IS HOPE, CHILD.

MISTRESS-- I BELIEVE.

SHE WAS *AMUSING*. I'LL SAY *THAT* FOR HER.

NO, IT FELT *RIGHT*. IT *FELT* LIKE THE *TRUTH*. OR A TRUTH, ANYWAY.

DO YOU THINK IT WILL *HAPPEN?*

MMM. NICE PLUMP RAT.

LITTLE ONE, I WOULD LIKE TO SEE *ANYONE*-- PROPHET, KING OR *GOD*--PERSUADE A THOUSAND CATS TO DO *ANYTHING* AT THE SAME TIME.

NO, IT WILL *NEVER* HAPPEN.

"COME ON, SMALL FRY. THE SUN WILL RISE SOON. WE HAD BETTER GET YOU HOME."

MIAOW, THE QUALITY CATFOOD. IT'S PURR-FECT FOR **YOUR** BEST FRIEND.

AW, TURN THAT OFF, HON. I CAN'T HEAR MYSELF ***THINK***. DO YOU REMEMBER WHERE I PUT DOWN MY ***BRIEFCASE*** LAST NIGHT?

I CAN'T ***SEE*** IT.

IT'S IN THE ***HALL***, DON.

MEEP.

HEY--I THINK KITTY'S DREAMING.

DON? ISN'T THAT ***CUTE***?

CLOVER

CORN FLAKES

DREAMING?

MM. I WONDER WHAT ***CATS*** HAVE TO DREAM ABOUT?

THE WAY IT'S TWITCHING ABOUT, I THINK MAYBE IT'S ***HUNTING*** SOMETHING.

SOME ***SMALL ANIMAL***, I SUPPOSE.

YEAH.

YEAH, HONEY. IT'S REALLY ***CUTE***.

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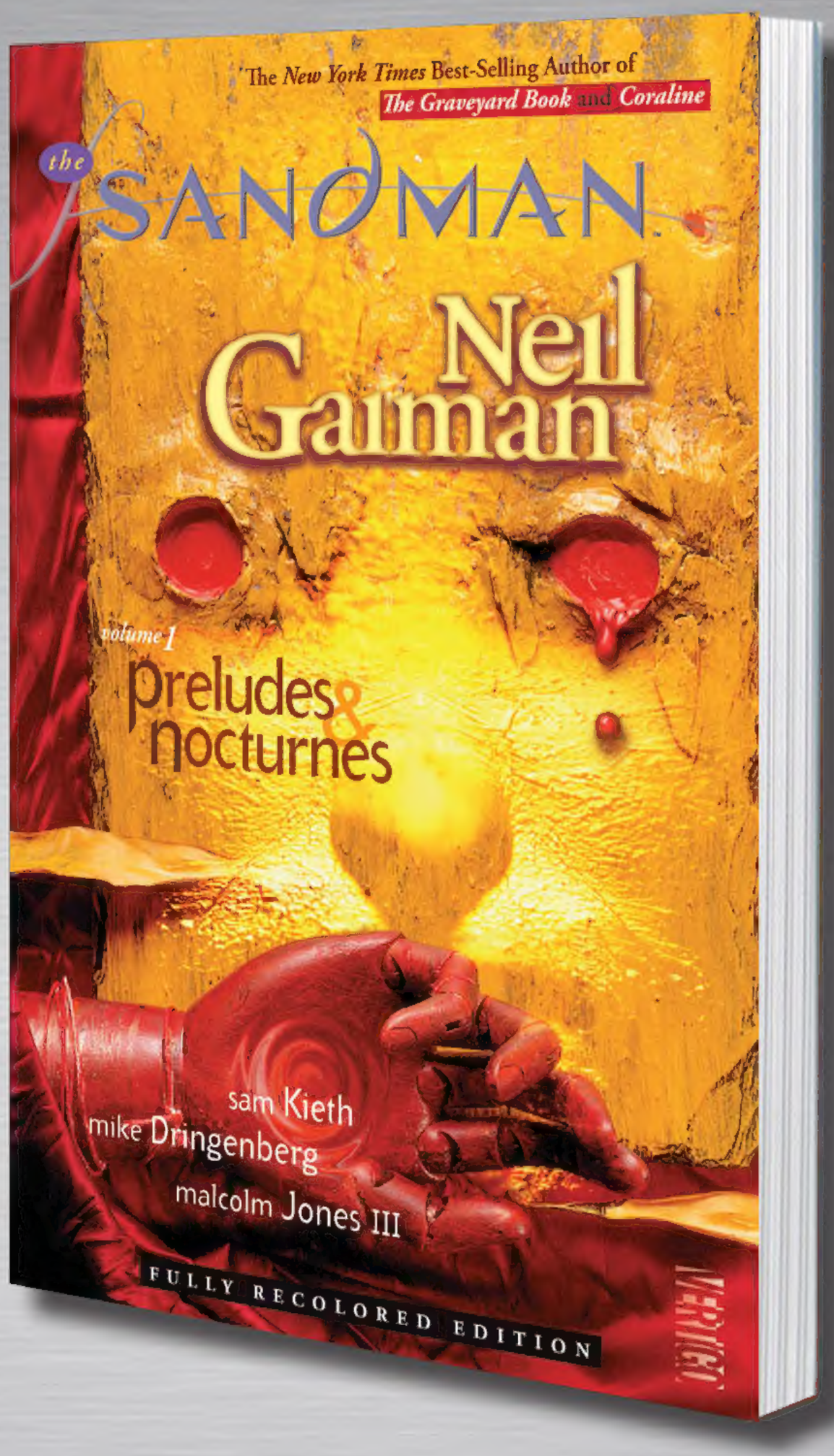

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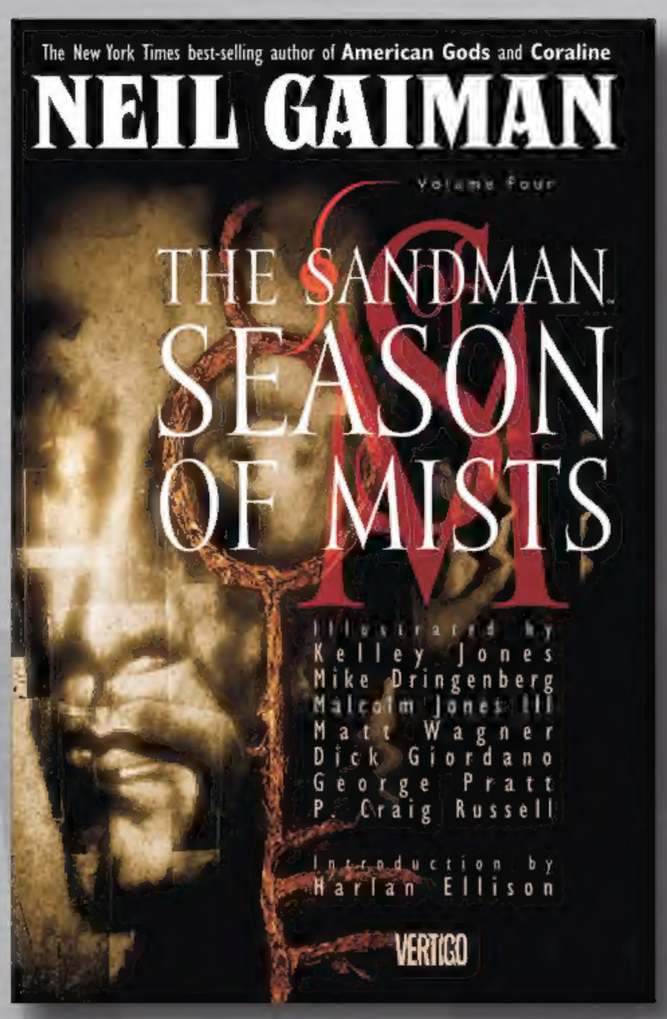

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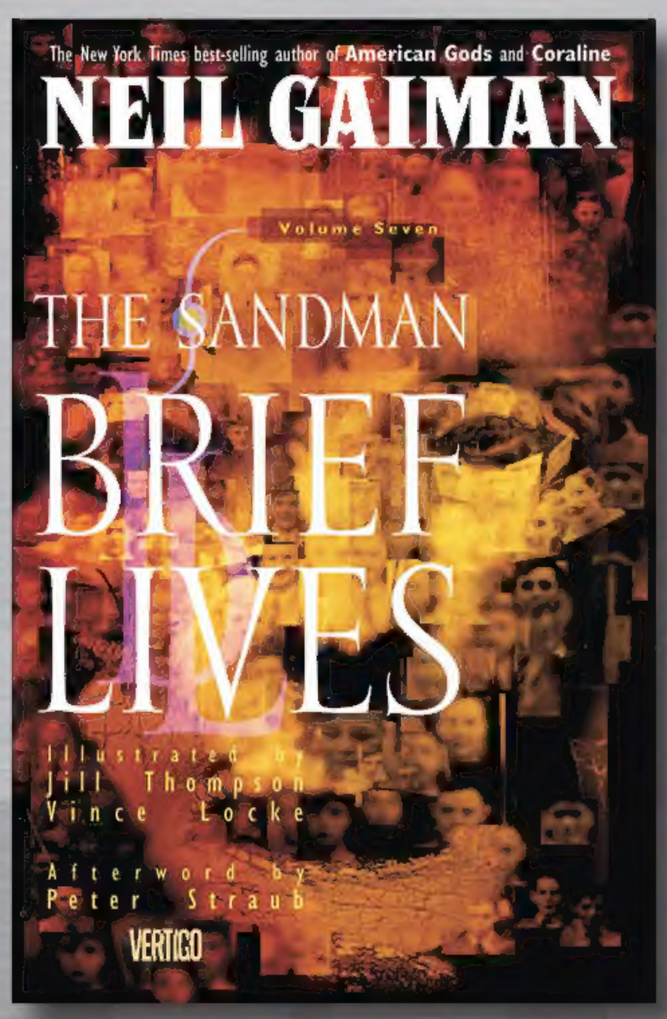

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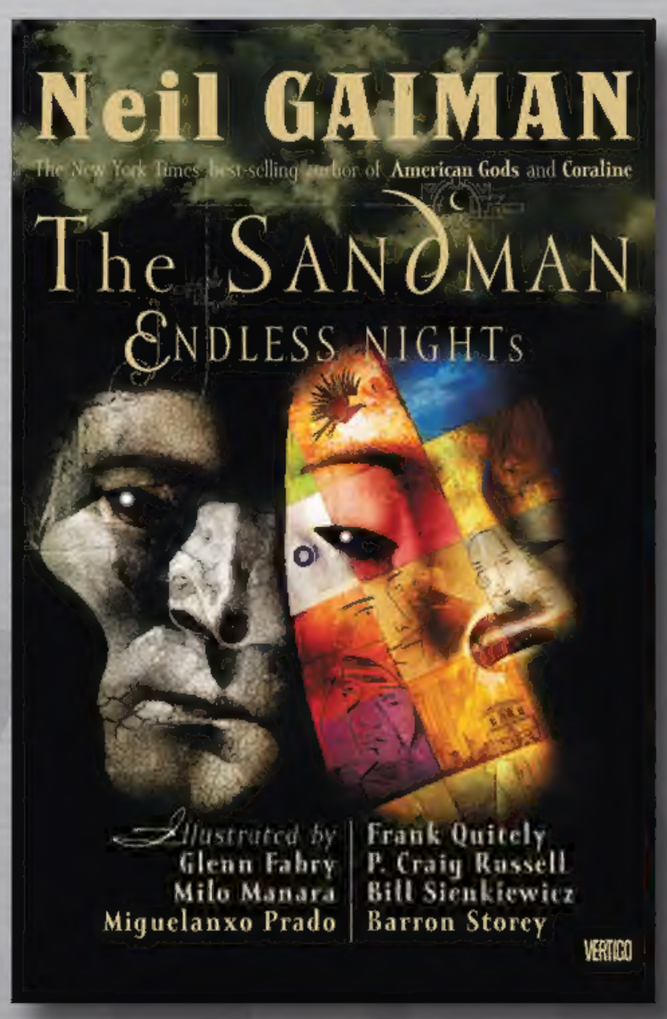

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